

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) A process for producing carboxylic acid, comprising converting at least one cyano group of a nitrile compound into a carboxyl group using a microorganism, wherein a variant microorganism defective or reduced in the activity of converting a cyano group into an amide group is used.
2. (Withdrawn) The process for producing carboxylic acid as claimed in claim 1, wherein said variant microorganism is a variant strain of a bacterium belonging to the genus *Rhodococcus*.
3. (Withdrawn) The process for producing carboxylic acid as claimed in claim 2, wherein said variant strain of a *Rhodococcus* bacterium is a variant strain of a parent strain *Rhodococcus* sp. ATCC39484.
4. (Withdrawn) The process for producing carboxylic acid as claimed in claim 3, wherein the variant strain of a parent strain *Rhodococcus* sp. ATCC39484 is *Rhodococcus* sp. SD826 (FERM BP-7305).
5. (Withdrawn) The process for producing carboxylic acid as claimed in claim 1, wherein the nitrile compound is a polynitrile compound having a plurality of cyano groups in the molecule and the carboxylic acid is a cyano carboxylic acid.

6. (Withdrawn) The process for producing carboxylic acid as claimed in claim 5, wherein the polynitrile compound is an aromatic polynitrile compound and the cyano carboxylic acid is an aromatic cyano carboxylic acid.

7. (Withdrawn) The process for producing carboxylic acid as claimed in claim 6, wherein the aromatic polynitrile compound is selected from the group consisting of o-phthalonitrile, isophthalonitrile, and terephthalonitrile, and the aromatic cyano carboxylic acid is corresponding o-cyanobenzoic acid, m-cyanobenzoic acid, or p-cyanobenzoic acid.

8. (Currently amended) An isolated ~~mutant~~ microorganism having the activity of converting a cyano group into a carboxyl group and being defective or reduced in the activity of converting a cyano group into an amide group,

wherein said microorganism is a mutant strain of a microorganism belonging to the genus *Rhodococcus*.

9. (Canceled)

10 (Currently amended) The isolated ~~mutant~~ microorganism as claimed in claim 8~~9~~, wherein said microorganism~~which~~ is a mutant strain of *Rhodococcus* sp. ATCC39484.

11. (Original) A *Rhodococcus* sp. SD826 (FERM BP-7305) strain.

12.-58. (Canceled)

59. (Canceled)

60. (Currently amended) The isolated ~~mutant~~ microorganism according to claim 98, wherein said microorganism has been treated with a mutagen so as to inactivate or reduce the activity of the microorganism to convert a cyano group into an amide group.

61. (Currently amended) The isolated ~~mutant~~ microorganism according to claim 59 ~~or 60~~, wherein said mutagen is selected from the group consisting of an alkylating agent, a nucleotide analog, an intercalating agent and ultraviolet radiation.